

C O R

P S E

W A Y

H A W T H O N N

HAWTHONN CORPSE WAY

I. OF EARTH I AM

II. HETERODOXOLOGY

Part of *Prelude 2020*

Commissioned by Aerial Festival & the Quietus

Music, text and images by Layla and Phil Legard

Mastered by Hermetech Mastering

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TORIES PLOTTING BONFIRE OF THE PLANNING LAWS

Automatic permission in 'three-zone' system

Move to recast planning rules sparks chaos warning

Fears shake-up would remove local control
Plans to fast-track housing projects 'will be disastrous'



HOUSING

Relaxed planning laws a 'developers' charter'

The biggest shake-up of planning laws for decades has caused fury that moves to fast-track construction of "beautiful" across England will "dilute democratic oversight, cheapen affordable housing and create a 'slum' dwe Under the proposal

Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his senior aide Dominic Cummings have both advocated reform to the system and the proposals in the Planning for the Future White Paper set out the Government's vision.

The new process will involve quicker development on land which has been designated for 'renewal', with a 'permitted principle' approach that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government said last

"Nationally, nine in 10 planning applications are approved."

Cam Andrew Miller, of City of York Council.

homes which are affordable". Currently, it takes an average of two years for a standard house to pass through the planning process.

delivered through the planning system. We urge the government to heed these warnings and not further side-line the planning process."

He said it was a 'myth' that reform was a barrier to housing growth and that it was not out of that time.

'Planning revolution won't help our families'

By **ROBERT SUTCLIFFE**
robert.sutcliffe@theguardian.com
www.theguardian.com

"Across Kirklees, 11,112 families are stuck on the housing waiting list. This is unacceptable. With councils across the country approving nine out of 10 planning applications, it is obvious that reforming planning laws will not help people on waiting lists or struggling to

THE Government's plans to reform the planning system have been attacked by Lindsay Lib Dem councillors who

I.

AGAINST THE NEW NORMAL

When lockdown began, it felt like - in some fundamental way - nothing could be the same again. Was this going to sound the death-knell of neo-liberal capitalist society? We know that - amidst the worry and the drudgery - a lot of fellow travellers hoped so. The travails of key workers, and the power of Black Lives Matter captured the world's attention. For a moment, it seemed almost that a new and fairer world was possible... if just out of reach.

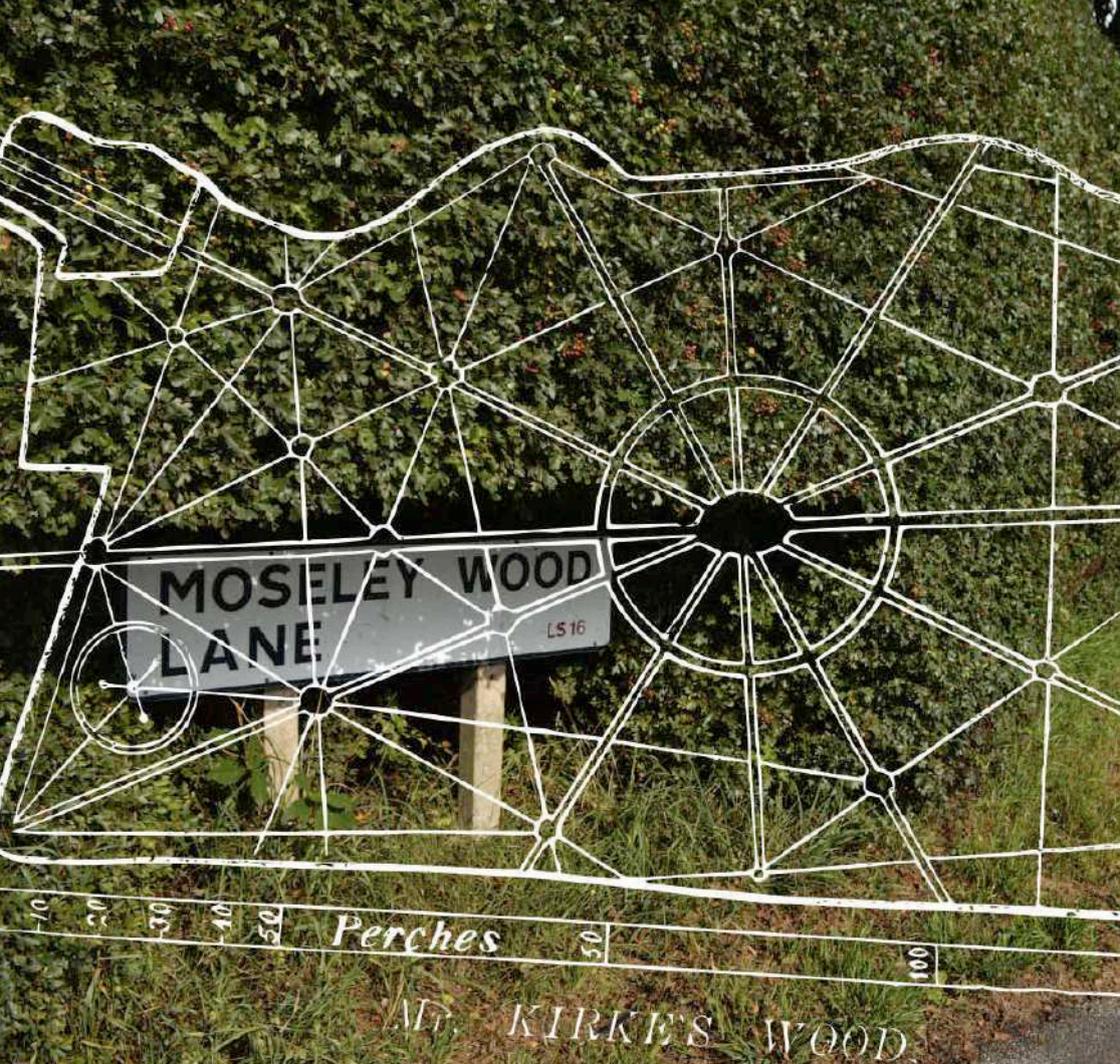
Of course, things don't change so easily. It's depressing that the situation needs to become even worse than it is now for anything meaningful to happen. Slowly things began to move toward a 'new normal'. During this period, we'd been focusing our creative concerns on an unassuming field in the Leeds suburb of Adel: the site of an ancient footpath, known as the Corpse Way, which had marked the last journey of departed souls as they were carried from the village, across the field, to the 12th-century Norman church of St. John's on the other side.

The field had been, for some time, under threat from a housing development by Barratt David Wilson Homes, who hope to tarmac the Corpse Way and build a much-opposed development in jarring red brick. Given that houses in the neighbouring Centurion Fields development went for £450k, and given that only a third of Barratt's proposed 99 houses are 'affordable' (1 or 2 bedroom) properties, it's evident that there

is a significant amount of money at stake for the developers, and little about the development that would seriously address the serious housing poverty in Leeds.

We were elated when their proposal was rejected in June... only to be dejected when the plans were unexpectedly approved a few weeks later, with no further public consultation. The struggle to save the field has come to symbolise for us an opposition to the idea of a return to 'normality', and particularly our rejection of what will become the post-pandemic, post-Brexit norm: the 'red tape' cutting developers' charter masterminded by Boris Johnson and Dominic Cummings known as 'permission in principle'; a predictably free rein for merciless money-grabbing and exploitation of the environment.





MOSELEY WOOD
LANE

LS 16

10 20 30 40 50

Perches

5

100

MT. KIRKE'S WOOD

II. GHOSTS OF THE LAND

One notable benefactor of Adel St. John's church was Thomas Kirke, an 18th century antiquarian and Fellow of the Royal Society. Resident at Cookridge Hall, Kirke transformed several acres of woodland at the nearby Moseley Wood into a labyrinth of interconnecting nodes, paths, and views. Having returned to a rather primeval form, the overgrown avenues of Kirke's wood were gradually encroached upon and erased by the building of modern estates between the 1920s and 1970s. Although unlike the Adel field development, it is hard to imagine anywhere more mundane and reassuringly working-class than Cookridge.

Green Lane is the main artery of Cookridge, and follows the general path of the chief avenue of the vanished Kirke's wood. However, standing at the top of Green Lane, the lay of the land is still inescapable - the slope, the undulations, the valley between the estate and Leeds-Bradford airport. Walking toward the centre of Kirke's labyrinth (now, where Green Lane and Moseley Wood Lane intersect), one can imagine the views, and in some sense the landscape is a palimpsest, haunted by the ghost of Kirke's wood. This is one small consolation: the contours of the corpse way field will bleed through whatever overlays it.





III.

FENCE AND FIELD

We've walked back and forth along the Corpse Way countless times in the last decade, making many memories. We were first introduced to its significance by local historian and earth-mysteries researcher John Billingsley. We fondly remember finding the field partially flooded and iced-over one winter, our three-year-old son gleefully cracking the ice. Crossing it with our friend Ben Chasny, on a magickal history tour, watching the waving corn planted in the eastern end of the field. It was something of a shock to arrive one afternoon to find access to the whole western end - bar the right of way itself - blocked by iron fences erected by the developers.

Since then, we can hardly count the amount of times we've beat on the fence in defiance (and incorporated it into our recordings), or how many signs, symbols, and sigils we have interred at the site, most recently in collaboration with our friend Graham, who records geological drones under the alias Borehole. The fences feel like an affront. "We own this place", they say, "You're lucky we're even deigning to let you pass through."

It's strange to think about how many residents of the parish made their final journey along this path, crossing west-to-east, against the sun, to the churchyard beyond. The site feels alive. Only yards from main road, and a chain pub with attendant Wacky Warehouse, the Corpse Way fields like

a last connection to another life. The developers may have to contend with the lie of the land, but to churn the path up, to cover it in tarmac, to tear up the ancient stiles - this is akin to tearing the heart out of the place. So, we scramble to protect and document what we will. To take souvenirs of soil and leaf, to photograph, make recordings, give the place another life, to ensure that it resounds in the imagination long after it has vanished.





IV.

THE WATCHERS

We began this commission at St. John's Church, Adel, across the road from the western end of the Corpse Way: the final destination for many of the parish. We continue to be spellbound by the architecture of this place. The astonishing corbels both inside and out are primitive and entrancing. The scholar Rita Wood has transformed our understanding of the place with her observation that the corbels outside the church - mainly human and animal masks - depict the people of the present, watching the skies for the second coming of Christ... the apocalypse. The sculptures over the door also depict the events of Revelation, and the dedication of the church to St. John cements this.

Inside the church is a vast, intricate chancel arch, consisting of 37 more corbels, often depicting demonic forms that seem to be devouring people. The less imaginative have supposed that these images are moralistic depictions of what sinners can expect in the afterlife. Rita Wood, however, suggests that rather than being devoured, these souls are being reborn into heaven on earth. The sculptures on the exterior watch for the apocalypse. Those on the inside experience the eschaton: the restoration of God's kingdom.

On the western face of the church, overlooking the Corpse Way, are nine corbels. They took on a profound significance to us: they were watching the place. The secular understanding of the term apocalypse - most often

associated with nuclear armageddon - is one of utter destruction. Faces engraved with holy intent, silently overseeing the field's own apocalypse. Ourselves, feebly attempting to preserve or transfigure it in some way... to give the field its own imaginative eschaton.

We are both thoroughly secular people, but we believe in the power of imagination. Dreams and imagination move us profoundly, and often seem more real than waking-life. They can lead us into new ways of life. Complexity and ambiguity are the food of imagination. Imagination is in mud, grass, and erratic nature. The Corpse Way is imagination. After visiting the church, we walked along the Corpse Way, toward Cookridge. We both admitted that, as we sat in the church, contemplating the chancel arch, we had - in our own ways - prayed for the Corpse Way.





V.

MOON-EYED AND MOUTHLESS

During the evening that followed our encounter with the 'watchers', we sculpted a series of effigies using clay mixed with soil from the site. Layla sculpted the head of an archetypal watcher, moon-eyed and mouthless, which was accompanied by the three figures from the central row of the corbels: a skeletal face, a devil, and a dragon, or serpent, each one in a winding sheet. Layla wrapped them in muslin, and we took them to the field the following night to inter them. She recorded the funereal rite in her diary:

We set off from the west end of the path in darkness. It was the night before the new moon. Phil carried them - effigies of clay in white muslin winding sheets - and despite our giddiness on the bus up to Adel, as we set off the mood suddenly took on the surreally sombre attitude of a funeral procession. I felt the impending loss of this place: the hedgerow I brushed past as we walked into the field would soon be gone, the stones we stepped over taken away, the tall ash trees in the distance would be only memory.

The darkness ensured a slow gait, and the day's rain gave uneasy footing as we held on (resentfully) to the mesh fences at points. The mud underfoot took me back to my mum's funeral ten years ago: my sister and I both in black court shoes bought specially for

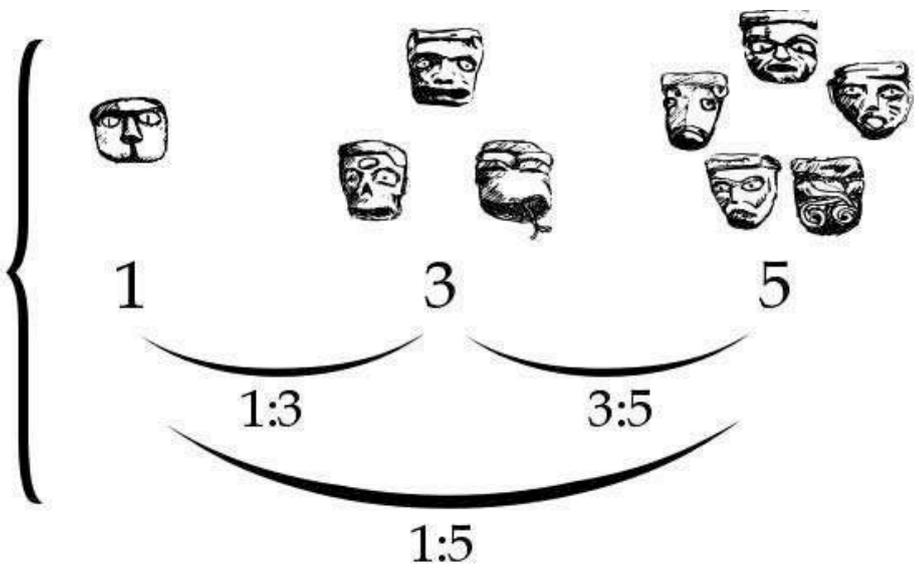
the occasion. The churchyard where we buried her was sodden, and at the graveside we clung to each other desperately, almost laughing through our tears as our heels sank into the wet earth.

I looked up at the sky, pinprick stars visible between the hazy blanket of clouds, and felt tears on my cheeks. I had to concentrate as the field dipped to meet the beck and, as we reached the bridge, a mist descended. We paused and hummed a lullaby melody composed by Graham. Controlling our breathing made the mood change again - almost elation at the beauty of the night, the orange glow of street light from the neighbouring housing development diffracted by the fog into an array of dazzling beams. The ash trees bowed in the wind as we passed: a nod of recognition.

We reached the end of the path and chose a spot to bury the Watchers. Phil read a few words - three verses of nine words each. It did not feel like a funeral. It felt like tucking up a child to sleep. They looked like a host of angels in gauzy wrappings.



Harmonic Ratios



Euclidean Rhythms



VI. MUSICKING

It has been suggested that the power of music is undermined by over-explanation. That said, we'd like to draw attention to some of the sounds and processes we used. Both tracks open with field recordings: *Of Earth I Am* captures the sound of the Moseley Wood estate, while *Heterodoxy* begins with the bells of Adel church (the very voice of the Watchers!) captured from the western end of the Corpse Way - as the track progresses the perspective gradually moves from the Corpse Way to the churchyard itself. These nine corbels became extremely important to the whole project: our watchers, our guides, and often a direct influence on the structures of the music. The 'beat' at the end of *Of Earth I Am* is a Euclidean rhythm based on the division of a bar into one, three, and five - mirroring the arrangement of the corbels. 1, 3, and 5 were also used as harmonic ratios to yield a set of intermodulating frequencies yielding the synthesiser part in *Heterodoxy*. Other sounds cropping up in the piece include reverberations of the drain covers of the pumping station on the neighbouring Centurion Fields estate, the rattling of fences, and sweeping radio electronic tones picked up on an ultrasonic detector while crossing the Corpse Way (their sudden appearance an uncanny and unnerving moment, like the wailing of the dead).





VII.

AFTERMATH

Our concerns might seem parochial against the wider national and global context... although the field became a symbol to us for a number of issues, both local and national - particularly the way the government treats nature and heritage as expendable in its effort to 'get back to normal' and stimulate some sort of development boom. Being on the political left, it's been unusual for us to find that our only ally in defending the Corpse Way is the local Conservative councillor: a form of conservatism which seems almost quaint in the light of the upper echelons of the party and their shift to the economics of a neoliberal race-to-the-bottom.

Although Wordsworth began as a radical democrat and abolitionist, he turned toward radical Toryism and often apologist for slavery, while his noble poor are romanticised images of a genuine poor whose only choices were feudal exploitation by landlords, or industrial exploitation in factories. The relationship between Romanticism and Conservatism has often been one that troubles us - and the failure of the imagination on the part of the Left is often something we similarly lament.

But Romanticism, and its sublime reveries, can be claimed by all. We do not have to up sticks to the countryside. The liminal places attract us. Under the dark skies of London, Blake could find heaven in a wild flower,

under the dark skies of the present we can find it in a muddy field in suburban Leeds.

Layla & Phil Legard
Leeds, August 30th 2020



